

_____ xx, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
LHHS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
LHHS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

Thank you for your continued support of our nation's network of poison control centers and its authorized Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) funding. Your support has allowed our country's current network of 55 poison control centers to continue providing life-saving access to vital health care services in every state in the country. Given the opioid crisis facing our country, the nation's poison control and drug information centers are a proven, established, national resource uniquely capable to assist in addressing this public health challenge. Therefore, we are respectfully requesting that the Committee provide full funding for the Poison Control Program in the amount of \$30.1 million in fiscal year 2021, as reauthorized in the Poison Center Network Enhancement Act enacted in December 2019.

Unintentional poisoning is the leading cause of injury death in the U.S.¹ For over 50 years, the Poison Control Program has been our nation's primary defense against injury and death from poisonings. Today, the Poison Control Program's national network provides access to health care advice to the general public and health care providers, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A dramatic increase in opioid overdose is contributing to the rise in drug poisoning in the country.² According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2017 over 70,000 opioid and other drug-related overdose deaths occurred in the U.S. In the FY21 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, HHS noted that "Poison Control Centers are on the frontline of the opioid epidemic handling opioid-related calls every day...."³ The nationally coordinated Poison Control Centers (PCCs) communications and database are uniquely positioned to help with the opioid crisis.

In addition to annually saving countless lives and reducing poisoning injuries, the services provided by PCCs save money by reducing the severity of illness and lowering treatment costs.⁴ Every dollar invested in the poison control center system saves \$13.39 in medical costs and lost

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Injury Prevention & Control: Data and Statistics, 2017. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/images/lc-charts/leading-causes-of-death-by-age-group-unintentional-2017-1100w850h.jpg>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Injury Prevention & Control: Opioid Overdose, 2017. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/>.

³ Department of Health and Human Services, FY21 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. Available at: <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/about/budget/budget-justification-fy2021.pdf>

⁴ Friedman LS, Krajewski A, Vannoy E, Allegretti A, Wahl M. The Association between US Poison Center assistance and length of stay and hospital charges. *Clinical Toxicology*, 2014 Mar; 52(3); 198-206.

productivity, for a total savings of more than \$1.8 billion every year.⁵ These savings are attributed to over \$752.9 million in avoided ER visits, \$444.1 million in reduced hospital stays, \$23.9 million in the prevention of poisonings, and \$603 million in reduced work-loss days.

Finally, the nation's poison control centers are engaged as first responders in many public health emergencies to help reduce poisoning-related health care costs, prevent injuries, and save lives. Public health emergencies including Ebola, the Zika virus, and now the COVID-19 coronavirus, utilize the education and data capabilities of the poison center national network of toxic exposure and public health experts. Each year, the Poison Control Program also provides critical situational surveillance and real-time data to federal, state and local agencies, including the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration. Recognizing the critical role of the Poison Control Program, we respectfully request strong federal support for this important program.

We are grateful for your support for the Poison Control Program. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate

Joe Manchin III
United States Senate

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senate

Sherrod Brown
United States Senate

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senate

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate

⁵ Value of the Poison Center System: Lewin Group Report, 2011.

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senate

Brian Schatz
United States Senate

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senate

Richard J. Durbin
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